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DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY (MIS), VOLUME VIII LATIN AMERICA (U)

NOVEMBER 1979

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MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY (MIS), VOLUME VIII
LATIN AMERICA (U)

DDB-2680-108A-79

Information Cutoff Date: 1 September 1979

This publication supersedes
MIS-Volume VIII, September 1979,
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which should be destroyed

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PREFACE

~~(C)~~ The Military Intelligence Summary (MIS), published in eight volumes, is a synopsis of military intelligence worldwide. Intended to serve as a ready reference, the MIS presents a compilation of intelligence on those forces which contribute to the military security of each country, and on the political and economic factors affecting the country's military capability. Published semiannually, the MIS serves to update information in other DIA publications.

(U) Unless otherwise indicated, the information in Volumes IV and VIII is that available in DIA as of 1 April and 1 October. The data cutoff date for the other volumes is 1 January and 1 July.

(U) Information summarized in the MIS is available in detail in numerous DIA publications. A list of related publications, both completed and scheduled, is published in the Register of Intelligence Publications (DDS-2600-37-79) and the Defense Intelligence Production Schedule (DDM-2600-35A-79). The Intelligence Users Guide (DDP-2600-397-79) explains how to obtain finished intelligence products and services from DIA.

(U) Addressees are requested to forward information which will supplement or correct this volume. Questions and comments should be referred in writing to the Defense Intelligence Agency (ATTN: DB-3E), Washington, D. C. 20301.

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1. ~~(C/NOFORN)~~ Political-Military Situation: Guatemala is a republic with a popularly elected President and legislature. The military are a pervasive part of the system of government, both national and local. The current level of military influence is considered high and is expected to continue at this level for the foreseeable future. The current President, Major General Fernando Romeo Lucas Garcia, was inaugurated on 1 July 1978 for a 4-year term. The two retired military officers who opposed him in the election appear to have stepped down from the political scene, thereby removing a potential cause of factionalism in the military officer corps and facilitating loyalty to Lucas among military officers.

(~~C/NOFORN~~) President Lucas' record to date has not been impressive. His administration has made few policy innovations, and much of its energy appears to have been spent in bureaucratic jockeying and putting out fires. Its performance, thus far, places it well within the conservative mold of its predecessor. Lucas himself has not shown forceful leadership, and the level of competence of his Cabinet appears weak.

(~~C/NOFORN~~) The Lucas government, early in its term, served notice that it would not tolerate demonstrations lacking prior authorization. This set the stage for clashes with labor and other leftist opposition organizations which had grown emboldened during the more permissive years of ex-President Laugerud. An October 1978 incident exposed the urban problem. Beginning as a protest over announcements of a 5-cent increase in bus fare (from 5 to 10 cents), the event was soon followed by widespread strikes and labor unrest. The protest, fueled at times by leftist students and political and union groups, degenerated into rioting. Lucas finally reacted to heavy criticism from various sectors, which backed his campaign, by ordering the police to move with firmness against strikers and protestors to bring the 9 days of violence under control. Had the disorders continued, they would have posed a serious threat to the Lucas government's continuance in power. The military stood back and allowed Lucas to deal with the problem using the National Police. The rioting was curbed, but bus fare has remained at five cents.

(~~C/NOFORN~~) Human rights continue to suffer from the Government's inability to deal effectively with high levels of violence. During the period Lucas has been in office, there have been reports of a revival of an anticriminal "death squad." Some of the recent murders and mysterious disappearances have been attributed to such a group, possibly acting behind the facade of a "Secret Anti-Communist Army." Violent acts against political and labor personalitites have incresed since the October 1978 crisis. Government actions in dealing with that issue resulted in the dismantling of most public sector labor groups.

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Attention now seems to focus on private sector labor groups, with violence directed at union leaders.

~~(C/NOFORN)~~ In the area of political rights, the first new political parties in 10 years have been certified during the first year of Lucas' administration. A total of 14 new parties had filed applications, and as of September 1979, 4 had been certified, including 1 leftist party, the FUR (Frente de Unidad Revolucionario--United Revolutionary Front. The leader of this party and former Mayor of Guatemala City, Manuel Colom Argueta, was murdered in March 1979, several days after his party had attained certification. This and the murder of Social Democratic leader and former Foreign Minister, Alberto Fuentes Mohr, 2 months earlier, is a setback to the movement to open the political doors for wider choices and more open elections. Army Chief of Staff, Major General David Cancinos Barrios, who was scheduled to be elevated to the position of Minister of Defense on 1 July 1979, and considered by many as President Lucas' choice as successor to the Presidency, was assassinated on 10 June 1979.

~~(C/NOFORN)~~ Some of the issues which the Lucas government must address are: inflationary pressures on the poor (12-14 percent per year for the past 4 years), growing labor militancy, and left- and right-wing violence, aimed at socioeconomic redress and intimidation of political opponents.

~~(S/NOFORN)~~ The mid-1976 resurgence of extreme left terrorist activities continued into 1979, but most left terrorist acts during the first 9 months of the year occurred away from the capital city. The Guatemalan Army of the Poor (EGP) has been the most active group, and its terror actions have been largely in the northern portions of Huehuetenango and Quiché Departments. EGP propaganda activities have also occurred along the Pacific coastal region and in the capital city. Terrorist acts have run the broad spectrum from short term seizure and propagandizing of small towns to murders and kidnappings. One of the more bizarre incidents was the April 1979 EGP takeover of the town of San Miguel de Uspantan in central Quiché Department, where town people were coerced into attending propaganda lectures in the town's central plaza. This action followed the January 1979 seizure of Nebaj in west-central Quiché Department. Witnesses to both of these incidents claimed that Guatemalan Indians were among the EGP group.

~~(C/NOFORN)~~ Since January 1977, the Guatemalan Army has conducted counterinsurgency operations in northern Quiché Department and the Ixcan River area but has been unable to exert any real pressure or achieve a decisive action, partially due to the remoteness of these areas and the rugged nature of the terrain. Other extreme leftist

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terrorist groups, the radical dissident group of the Communist Party (PGT) and the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR), have been active in propaganda activity but have taken credit for only a few terrorist acts.

(~~C/NOFORN~~) Traditionally, good feelings toward the United States soured among the military in 1975 when the US did not sell C-47 aircraft to Guatemala. Relations worsened in March 1977 when it became known that the US Secretary of State's report to the US Congress on human rights criticized Guatemala for past abuses. Considering this to be strictly an internal affairs issue, the Guatemalan Government responded by rejecting all US military aid and all sales of military equipment that are conditional on the issue of human rights. Late in 1977, the Guatemalan Government attempted to purchase F-5 aircraft from the US. After some delay, the request was denied. In late 1978, Guatemala expressed an interest in purchasing the T-34 aircraft from the US to support the Air Force pilot training program which began in February 1979. They were provided with pricing data but chose to purchase a similar aircraft (Pilatus PC-7) from Switzerland. This decision was based on three factors: fear that the US would not sell T-34s to Guatemala, thereby subjecting their pride to another US refusal; the Swiss offer of prompt delivery and good terms; and assurance by the Swiss that the aircraft would be delivered with hard points on which armament can be mounted for use in gunnery training of new pilots.

(~~C/NOFORN~~) Toward the end of the Laugerud administration, Guatemala requested to resume participation in the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program. This request was received too late for consideration in the FY 79 IMET program but was included in FY 80 legislation for the amount of $250,000. In late March 1979, the Guatemalan Government was informed through the local press that the House of Representatives had deleted Guatemala from IMET because of its human rights record under the Lucas administration. This drew strong reactions from Guatemalan Government officials including suggestions that the US Military Group might be asked to leave the country. The Guatemalan Government awaits official word of the status of IMET and this will not be forthcoming until after the US Senate acts on the bill. Nevertheless, the House action on IMET for Guatemala is expected to result in further cooling of US-Guatemalan military relations and signals to them a compelling need to continue their search for other sources of arms, equipment, and training to maintain and modernize their military force.

(~~C/NOFORN~~) A major item of Guatemalan national preoccupation is the future status of neighboring Belize (formerly British Honduras), a United Kingdom dependency. Guatemala claims sovereignty over Belize based on territorial exploration by Christopher Columbus and on Spanish

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colonial government jurisdiction. UK claims are based on the establishment of a colony in 1638 by shipwrecked British sailors. The British would like to grant independence to Belize but fear that if they did, Guatemala would invade Belize and annex the territory.

(~~C/NOFORN~~) Relations with the UK have been sporadically tense for many years. In June 1977, certain inflammatory statements by Guatemalan officials, coupled with Guatemala's expressions of anger caused by Barbados' seizure of a shipment of 5.56-mm ammunition destined for Guatemala, resulted in the British making a large increase in the Belize garrison. Guatemala responded by making preparations for a conflict. In early July 1977, the situation was very tense, but an apparently productive round of negotiations managed to relax tensions. It appears that Guatemala would accept, in principle, the existence of an independent Belize, provided Guatemala were ceded some territory. Statements have been made by several Guatemalan Government officials, since early in 1978, that would indicate a relatively small cession of land in southern Belize would be acceptable to Guatemala. The Lucas administration's stance on the issue is similar to that of the Laugerud government's--recognition that total recovery of Belize is impossible and willingness to settle for a small territorial concession. Nevertheless, the Lucas government does not seem to be anxious to sacrifice the country's historical claim just to put the issue to rest. The future of negotiations is uncertain, but indications are that the Guatemalan Government senses it has more to gain by employing the tactic of delay then displaying an active interest in resolving the issue.

(~~C/NOFORN~~) Another preoccupation is fear that the Cuban supported Sandinista success in Nicaragua and the potentially explosive situation in El Salvador will lead to intensified internal security problems for Guatemala. President Lucas has met with the Presidents of El Salvador and Honduras to discuss the situation and has decided to provide economic aid in an effort to help rebuild Nicaragua's local businesses and middle class. It is hoped that these sectors will have a moderating effect on the direction of the Sandinista government, thus minumizing the international ramifications of the Nicaraguan's revolutionary zeal. The situation in El Salvador is more complex. The Guatemalans are willing to support any anti-Communist regime. However, the current El Salvadoran regime is perceived as being beyond help, and the Guatemalans are unsure exactly how to help prevent leftist elements from seizing control.

(~~C/NOFORN~~) Guatemala's Armed Forces are capable of defending the country against invasion by any of its Central American neighbors. They could conduct successful small-scale operations against El Salvador, Honduras, or--provided British elements were not present--Belize. The Guatemalan Army appears to be making a concerted effort to replace much

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of its obsolete equipment with new arms, purchased mainly from Belgium, Israel, Portugal, South Korea, and France. This seems to be part of a program to update its forces; be as well, if not better, armed as its Central American neighbors; and be prepared for action, if necessary, against Belize. The arms are being obtained from non-US sources because of Washington's past reluctance to supply Guatemala with the military assistance desired, and the present US policy of making aid dependent upon respect for human rights. Nevertheless, the US is honoring past commitments for military supplies by providing Guatemala with limited quantities of 5.56-mm ammunition, and also delivering a large shipment of vehicles to Guatemala in mid-1977.

(~~C/NOFORN~~) The Guatemalan Armed Forces are weakened by a top-heavy senior officer corps, absence of a career program for NCOs, and much obsolete equipment. Traditionally dependent upon the US for arms, Guatemala has been seeking new sources. Thus far, major items purchased from non-US sources are Galil rifles, RBY armored cars, field kitchens--all from Israel; 5.56-mm ammunition--Portugal, South Korea, Belgium, and Israel; and Pilatus PC-7 aircraft--Switzerland. They are presently interested in acquiring 105-mm howitzers, air defense artillery, mortars, armored cars, naval patrol craft, transport aircraft, and fighter/interceptor aircraft. Interest in acquiring new equipment is not so much to improve capability for actions against Belize as to update Guatemala's military force.

2. (U) Key Officials:

President: Maj Gen Fernando Romeo Lucas Garcia, Army
Minister of Foreign Relations: Rafael Castillo Valdez
Minister of National Defense: Maj Gen Otto Guillermo Speigeler Noriega, Army
Army: Chief of Staff, Brig Gen Angel Anibal Guevara Rodriguez
Navy: Commander, Col Mario Enrique Paiz Balanos
Air Force: Commander, Col Carlos A. Morales Villatoro
National Police: Director General, Col German Chupina Barahona

3. (U) Military Budget: $78,278,000 is the approved military budget for fiscal year ending 31 December 1979; this is 7.41% of the central government budget and 1.1% of the estimated GNP. No service allocation is available. Dollar value converted from quetzales at the exchange rate of one quetzal equals US $1.00.

4. (U) Population: 6,817,000 as of 1 July 1979
Males (ages 15-49): 1,574,000; physically fit, 1,025,000; 74,000 reach military age (18) annually
Ethnic Divisions: 41.4% Indian, 58.6% Ladino*
Literacy: About 30%

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5. ~~(C)~~ Army:
Personnel Strength: 14,000 (1,100 officers, 1,730 NCOs, 7,760 privates. 2,840 specialists, and 570 students and cadets).
Reserve: 35,000 semitrained.
Major Units: 5 brigades (1 infantry battalion each), 10 separate battalions (4 infantry, 1 airborne infantry, 1 military police, 1 engineer, 1 training, 1 transportation, and 1 Presidential Guard Battalion). In addition, a 400-man tactical group is stationed at La Aurora Air Base for airport security.
Major Equipment: 12 105-mm howitzers, 12 75-mm pack howitzers, 12 106.7-mm (4.2-inch) mortars, 5 M113 and 5 M113A1 armored personnel carriers, 10 RBY Mk. 1 armored personnel carriers (Israel), 15 M8 armored cars, and 7 Cadillac Gage V-100 armored cars. In addition, there are items in the inventory which are of questionable combat effectiveness because of age, including 4 M3A1 armored cars which are of World War II vintage and 7 World War II M3 light tanks considered so obsolete as to be useless. The Army is currently working on the M8 armored cars, including installing new engines to make them more effective.

6. ~~(C)~~ Navy:
Personnel Strength: 455 (40 general service officer, 5 Marine officers, 205 general service enlisted, and 205 enlisted Marines).
Reserve: None
Ships: 1 fast patrol craft (PCF) (32-meter), 10 patrol boats (PB) (2 25.9-meter, 5 19.8-meter, 1 19.2-meter, 2 12.2-meter), 2 river/roadstead patrol boats (PBR) (11-meter), 1 medium landing craft (LCM), 1 miscellaneous auxiliary (AG).**
Units: The Navy is a small patrol force, with 2 naval bases (1 on the Caribbean and 1 on the Pacific Coast) and 1 Marine company of 5 platoons (4 platoons on the Caribbean; 1 platoon on the Pacific Coast).

7. ~~(C)~~ Air Force:
Personnel Strength: 470 (65 officers, 405 enlisted), including 60 pilots
Reserve: None
Units: Four squadrons (1 fighter, 1 transport, 1 helicopter, and 1 maintenance).

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* Westernized Indian, mestizo, and white.

** In addition, two 8.5-meter river/roadstead patrol boats are out of the water and apparently not salvageable.

Aircraft: 64 total: 12 jets (10 A-37B fighters, 2 AT-33 trainers); 12 turboprops (trainers--2 Pilatus PC-7s; transports--9 Aravas, 1 C-12 Super King Air); 27 prop (13 transports--. DC-6B, 12 C-47s); 4 utility--3 Cessna 206s, 1 Cessna 180; 10 trainers--6 Cessna 172s and 4 T-41s); 13 helicopters (utility--8 UH-1Hs, 3 Alouette IIIs. 2 Lamas).*

8. ~~(U)~~ Paramilitary:
None. (The Civil Police consist of two distinct forces, both subordinate to the Minister of Government.)
Personnel Strength: National Police - 5,570; Treasury Police - 1,058.

9. (U) Key US Officials: (all in Guatemala City except as indicated)
Chief of Mission: Ambassador Frank V. Ortiz, Jr.
Deputy Chief of Mission: Melvin E. Sinn
Chief, AID Mission: Eliseo Carrasco
Defense Attaché and Army Attaché: Col Edward N. Fletcher
Naval Attaché (Mexico City): Capt Thomas M. Murdoch
Air Attaché (Tegucigalpa): Col William E. Miller
Military Group Commander and Chief Army Section: Col Donald R. Ley
Chief, Air Force Section: Lt Col Nicholas A. Schillen, Jr.
Joint Logistics Officer: Maj Michael L. Brown

10. (U) Foreign Military Presence:
Israeli Military Advisers: 2 (1 pilot and 1 maintenance representative assisting the Guatemalan Air Force with operations and maintenance of Arava aircraft).

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* Four additional Pilatus PC-7 aircraft purchased from Swiss to be delivered in 1979.